



Statement by Senator Feinstein in Recognition
of Martin Luther King Day

January 12, 2007

Washington, DC – *U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today released the following statement in recognition of Martin Luther King Day, on Monday, January 15, 2007:*

“On Monday, our nation will remember and commemorate the work and legacy of one of the greatest minds and leaders our country has known, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King devoted his life to ensuring that all men and women are granted equal rights -- a mission that is still ongoing in America today. Martin Luther King Day is an opportunity for all Americans to not only honor the life of a great man, but to reflect on the challenges our country still faces as a nation striving for equality.

As the father of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. King made it his life’s purpose to end segregation and racial discrimination in the United States, and through his unwavering efforts to achieve this goal he suffered much adversity and suffering. However, Dr. King always spoke of peace in the face of violence and his greatest weapons against injustice were his words. He is the epitome of an American hero.

During his time as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., Dr. King was inspired by the courageous actions of Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat on the city bus to a white passenger. Dr. King was launched into the national spotlight with his successful 13-month boycott of the Montgomery bus system’s segregation policies. In December of 1956, the United States Supreme Court declared Alabama’s segregation laws unconstitutional, which subsequently brought about the end of legalized segregation.

Using non-violent protests as a means for social change, King and other Southern black ministers founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957. King’s inspiring words and rousing leadership helped communities organize their own peaceful protests across the country against racial discrimination.

In the spring of 1963, King led mass demonstrations in Birmingham, Ala., where white police officers responded with brutal, violent tactics to break up the non-violent

protest. The national attention from this event prompted President Kennedy to introduce the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

On August 28, 1963, at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 250,000 protestors gathered at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to hear King deliver his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. These legendary words are now forever ingrained in our nation’s history, and our citizens’ hearts.

Dr. King was not able to see his dream fully realized, as he was tragically taken from us on April 4, 1968. However, the many great achievements he accomplished in his short lifetime have not faded. Rather, his legacy and message of peace and justice resonates in our country even more strongly today. Never before has one man influenced our nation’s history to such profound and significant social change. He helped us learn to celebrate our differences and embrace our multi-cultural, racially diverse population.

It is our duty to carry on his work and, in doing so, it is our responsibility to recognize and take action against the injustices that still remain in the fabric of our society. While we have taken great strides in overcoming the gaps of inequality in America’s framework, there are still important steps to be taken to build a strong foundation of equal rights for all.

Last year I strongly urged the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and we achieved a tremendous success when President Bush signed into law the 25-year renewal of this landmark legislation on July 27, 2006.

As Chairman of the Rules Committee for the 110th Congress, I will continue to promote the ideals set forth by Dr. King, and hope to take important steps to truly make our democracy one for all. We all have been given a great opportunity to lead this country toward an equal America, a stronger America, an America like the one envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King.

Dr. King was an amazing American and a legendary leader, who will continue to be a strong force of positive change in all our lives.”

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